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VALUABLE SUGGESTIONS.

ADDRESSED TO

THE SOLDIERS OF THE CONFEDERATE STATES,

BY REV. A. B. LONGSTREET, LL. D.

CHAPTER I.

I do not know that the attempt has ever been made to improve soldiers by an address to their reason and understanding. I propose to try the experiment, beginning with the *new recruits.*

It has grown into a proverb, that "*one hundred regulars will whip four hundred raw troops.*" The history of all wars proves this to be substantially true. And yet, the hundred, and the four hundred, are made up of the same material. How happens it that there is such a disparity between them? Can mere drilling make one man bolder than another? Impossible, as is proved by the fact, that when brought into battle for the first time, they are all alike—all equally alarmed and all equally apt to run. But the regulars soon become accustomed to battle, and nothing gives us alarm to which we are accustomed. They soon discover, too, that the roar of cannon and the bursting of bombs, which terrified them so

much in the first battle, are the most harmless of all the implements of warfare brought into the fields. They are better than raw troops, simply because they have got over the fears of raw troops. If, therefore, it were possible for new recruits to engage in their first battle with the calmness and self-possession of veterans, they would be equal to veterans. Is this impossible? Certainly not; for most of the troops with which Bonaparte fought the battle at Waterloo were new levies, and they fought as gallantly as the best on the field. This they did from the confidence in their General. They doubtless felt all the alarms common, to troops engaging in battle for the first time, but they did not yield to their fears. And to this point it seems to me any raw troops may bring themselves by the force of reason alone, especially when assisted a little, by experienced officers. Let each man go into the battle-field with this train of reflections: "I shall be frightened of course. At what? Why at the danger to which my life is exposed. Well now what is really the extent of the danger? In the most sanguinary battles, not one-fifth of the combatants are killed or wounded. The chances are, therefore, five to one that I shall not be hurt. The proportion of slightly and recoverably wounded is to the killed and mortally wounded as five to one. The chances are, therefore, five to one, that if touched at all I shall not be mortally wounded. The cannon

are the common engines which unnerve men. Now of the whole number of killed in battle, not more than one in one hundred are killed by cannon.* A hundred to one, therefore, that those noisy bellowers do not hurt me. The alternative is presented to me, to stand my ground in spite of my fears, or to run. Now, in which is the most danger? Why surely in running; for, as a general rule, of a given number, more men are killed in flight than in fight. While I stand my ground, I am all the time destroying, weakening and disheartening the enemy, and encouraging my companions in arms. Victory, therefore, is likely to ensure my safety. But in running, I may be killed by the very men whom I would have disabled had I stood firm. I weaken our forces, throw the battle upon a reduced number, expose them to increased labors and losses, become then an object of their hatred and contempt, dispirit them, and invigorate the foe, not only for this battle, but for all future battles. The regulars show that battles lose their terrors when we become used to them; how am I ever to become used to them by running? If I save my life by it, I increase the danger of being made prisoner a hundred fold. Fear or no fear, then, I will fight as long as the regulars fight."

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*I state this upon the authority of a Brigadier-General of many battles, who has turned his attention to this matter on the field.

Now in all this I put love of country; Yankee insolence and brutality, entirely out of the question; for with panic-stricken troops, carrying in their bosoms no antidote for their fears, or moral remedy for their natural effects, these considerations are utterly worthless, as has been most lamentably proven in our last great battle. The remedy is found in the foregoing train of reflections. They cannot make brave men of cowards—they cannot prevent fears on the battle-field, but they surely ought to make the coward and the timid fight manfully in spite of their infirmities. Officers should impress them on the minds of their new recruits; and as such men fight well under a General in whom they have confidence, they should always, if practicable, be attached to the brigade, division or corps in whose Generals they have the most confidence. Lord Wellington is reported to have said, that by nature he was a great coward, but that his pride of character, self-respect and love of country predominated over his fears. The consequence was, that he became the hero of heroes. I see no reason why every soldier in the Confederate army might not become a hero upon the same principle. I am aware of the military dogma, that men, to become good soldiers, must first become mere machines. If this be true, then it were better for us (policy aside) to make up our armies of stout able bodied negroes, enured to toil, than of their

high-minded, chivalrous, but more feeble masters. At the opening of the war our armies were composed mainly of troops of the latter class—men of science, men of wealth, men of the learned professions, congressmen, legislators, professors and students—all accustomed to a life of comparative ease. There was little drilling of them, or time for drilling them, before they were engaged in a series of battles. The conscript laws filled our ranks with men from all grades of society, and of all descriptions of character—in the main, hard-working, strong-muscled, able bodied men, accustomed to hard living and constant fatigue. They have been long in the "machine" factory, long enough to have every attribute of humanity drilled out of them. Has this class proved themselves to be better soldiers than the other? Have they fought better? Have they gained more victories? Have they endured more hardships, and with more patience? Are there fewer deserters among them? Let the advocate of *machinery* answer these questions.

The dogma which I have been considering is not only false, but is in the highest degree mischievous. If scientific war be but a conflict of machines, it necessarily follows that the power which has the greatest number of machines must in the end be victorious. How is it possible for nine millions of population (six we may say) to bring into the field as many men as can twenty-three millions? And

yet we seem to be trying the hopeless experiment. Everybody is to be called to arms. In reason's name, I ask why. We have a plenty of men enrolled to whip all the Yankees in the field at this time, if our men will but fight as they did at the beginning of the war! Did we lose the battle of Missionary Ridge from want of men? No, but from derangement of our *machinery*. And why should that defeat run us all crazy? I see nothing alarming in it. One of the bitter fruits of the dogma in question, is that officers who subscribe to it will take no pains to inspire their men with courage, self-confidence and high-toned patriotism, but will treat them pretty much as they would so many prize-fighters. Away with the false demoralizing dogma! Soldiers, you are moral agents; do for yourselves, then, what I would do for you if I could. Nerve yourselves up by your own mental energies to deeds of noble daring and unflinching valor, though your enemy be three to your one.

Chapter II.

My first chapter was addressed to *raw recruits*. It was not designed to dissipate their fears in battle, for no counsel can do this; but to teach them to be good soldiers in spite of their fears. To show them that if they will consult their own personal safety, they will fight in fear rather than run from fear. I now

address the *soldiers generally*. Much that I have said to the first class is equally applicable to this.

Men who engage in battle expecting to be whipt, are very certain to be whipt. The reason is plain: They fight without object, and without spirit—their thoughts more occupied in finding apologies for running than the achievement of victory. Now I can conceive of but these four things which can induce a rational being to expect defeat in battle:

1st. Superiority in numbers opposed to him.

2d. Superiority in arms.

3d. Superiority in valor.

4th. Superiority in generalship.

Let us consider these matters in their order:

1st. *Superiority in numbers.*

This is the bugbear that made cowards of us for thirty years before we seceded, which seems to have turned the heads of half the nation, civil and military, within the last two months, and which seems likely to make us destroy ourselves to keep the Yankees from destroying us.

I have already bestowed a few remarks upon this head; let us consider it a little more in detail. To give the instances in which brave men conquered twice and thrice their numbers would be to write a book. Take a few cases from our own history. At Big Bethel, thirteen hundred Confederates put to confusion and flight four thousand Federals. At the

battle of Blackburn's Ford (Bull Run) one brigade whipt twice its number. At the first battle of Manassas, thirty-eight thousand completely routed seventy-five thousand. It is said the Yankees fight better now than they did then; and that the Western Federals fight better than the Eastern. This may be true, but it would be a harmless truth if we did not fight worse. We whipt Western troops at Chickamauga, and we would have whipt them again at Missionary Ridge if a brigade or more of our men had not played the coward.

Even in the rout which these men led off, Cleburne's gallant band arrested the whole Federal army, when there were probably four to one against him. This I regard as by far the most brilliant feat of the war. To have stood his ground would have been creditable to him and his men, but in the midst of confusion and flight to have formed his men in an advantageous position, and to have maintained it against repeated assaults of overwhelming numbers, and to have defeated them, entitles him to a monument as high as Lookout, and to each of his men one as high as Missionary Ridge. I hope he will preserve with peculiar care the name of every man that stood by him in that memorable conflict.*

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*If the papers speak truth, according to Bragg, Bates and his small brigade are entitled to all the credit that I have given to Cleburne and his men. If so, let the names be changed and the honors stand.

Here, then, we have an illustration from the same battle-field, of the difference between running from superior numbers and fighting them bravely. Cleburne demonstrated, under every discouragement, that Western troops, even in the exultation of victory, may be whipt by inferior numbers, when possessed of superior valor. Let the renegades remember this, and retrieve their credit by fighting gallantly in their next battle!

There are other considerations which it seems to me should divest numbers of their terrors to reflecting troops; at least so far as to raise them above cowardly conduct.

These truths all will admit: The more men in the army, the more unwieldy and sluggish does it become, the more difficult is it to make them effective in action, the more on the sick list, the more killed by a given number of shots, the more transportation and provisions do they require, and the more unlikely that they will have a commander capable of directing their movements skillfully and usefully. These are most serious drawbacks to a large army, especially when far away from home. They will of themselves exhaust it in time. A small army, then, has every advantage of a large one, except in the single matter of numbers. They are more immediately under the eye of their commander, more readily concentrated, more prompt in reaching the points of attack, lose fewer in battle, and in retreat, (or-

derly retreat I mean,) are absolutely unapproachable by their cumbersome foe. These facts are of themselves sufficient to account for the many victories which inferior numbers have gained over superior. Let us suppose that Grant commands a hundred thousand men and Johnston but fifty thousand. There are twenty positions between Dalton and Atlanta, which Johnston may occupy with the certainty of whipping Grant, if his men will fight bravely. (It is to be hoped he has examined all these positions.) Should he be driven from one of these positions after hard fighting, his losses, compared with those of the enemy, will be about as one to five. And so of all the other positions. But there is one view of the subject which should quiet all fears of the soldier on the score of numbers, and it is this: That it is absolutely impossible for Grant to *conquer* Johnston in the case supposed, because it is absolutely impossible for him to *force* Johnston into a fight upon ground of his own choosing. Upon the whole, then, there is no great cause of alarm to the soldier in the numbers opposed to him. The Fabian policy avoids defeat at least

2d. *Superiority in arms.* Except in artillery, I know of no advantage the enemy have of us in arms—certainly none to be feared. Of artillery I have already spoken, and shown that they are the least formidable implements of war of any that are used. For the destruc-

tion of fortifications, ships and towns, cannon are useful; but for field service they are the most inconvenient, cumbersome, inefficient, expensive, worthless engines of war that ever were invented. A man told me he had been in six battles, and he had never seen a man killed by a cannon or bomb in his life. Another told me that he had belonged to an artillery corps for two years; that in that time they had broken down four teams of horses, and been brought into action but once, in which he had no reason to believe that they had killed a single man. They fear cannon, then, simply because men cease to reason when they engage in battle, and surrender themselves to their instinctive impulses.

3d. *Superiority in valor.* This the Yankees have never shown, and never will show, until our troops become the biggest of fools and the meanest of cowards.

4th. *Superiority of Generalship.* Certainly there is no cause for fear from this source as yet.

Reason down your fears, then, soldiers: but if you cannot; fight them down.

Chapter III.

In all that I have said to you, or mean to say to you, I suppose you to fight against superior numbers. I have endeavored to demonstrate to you, that there is not near the danger

in meeting superior numbers in the field that is generally supposed. In a conflict of one thousand against two thousand, the first of unyielding valor, and the second of common soldiery; which is likely to conquer? Every man in the world will answer, "the first." Is this not an unquestionable truth? Why, then, will not reasonable beings reduce it to practice in war? "Because," it will be answered, "men cannot screw themselves up to unyielding valor." True. but with a man of common sense, it should require but very little screwing to do that which will ensure him victory, valor or no valor. When I was a boy about thirteen years of age, my father lived fourteen miles from Augusta. On the road to the city, there was one point where a man had been murdered, and another where a woman had been killed, and stories were rife in the neighborhood of terrific sights seen at these places at night. I do not suppose that a house full of gold could have induced me to pass them alone at night. One day my father remarked, in my presence, "I never allowed my children to be frightened with foolish stories about ghosts, &c There is my ****, who, if necessary, would go from here to Augusta at midnight, with no more fear than I would feel at doing so." "Mercy on me," thought I, "how little my father knows of his ****!" But the remark had a magical effect upon me. It set me to thinking of the folly of my fears,

the glory I should have in verifying my father's opinion of me, and the shame that I should feel at his discovering that he had over-estimated me, and I began to entertain a timid desire to prove my heroism. Not long after this, I was belated, and had to pass one of these places at night and alone. I was awfully alarmed as I approached the spot, but I determined to go slowly by it. When I reached it my fears rapidly subsided; "and now," thought I, "if I can only tell, when I get home, that I stopped and searched for ghosts and blue-lights, and listened for groanings, &c., what an honor it will be to me!" I did so, and thenceforward became a tolerably brave boy.

Now, if such inducements as these could make a timid boy *act* the hero, why should not love of country, the glory of victory and the shame of defeat, make even cowards act the hero? But I am departing from the subjects proposed for this article. I come now to speak of actual operations in the field.

If ten thousand engage twenty thousand, the *labor* of fighting is about equal on both sides. The human constitution can only endure a certain amount of labor and fatigue, and at this point the belligerent must stop. All other things being equal then, if the ten thousand hold on to this point, *they cannot possibly be conquered;* and it is a hundred to one, that the twenty thousand yield the contest before they reach the point of exhaustion.

Charge of bayonets. If the soldier forgets all else that I have written or may write, let him not forget what I say upon this head. It has been said that in all Bonaparte's battles there were but three instances of a fight with bayonets. With these exceptions, whenever he or his adversaries brought the battle to a hand-to-hand fight, one or the other party invariably gave way. Now he fought every nation in Europe, and (with one exception,) always with inferior numbers. The Turks he fought in Egypt and Syria—a barbarous people. At Acre, he fought the Turks, assisted by the English. I do not remember that his troops ever recoiled from a charge of bayonets. Be that as it may, we all know that up to his Russian campaign, his battles were little else than one unbroken series of victories. I have enquired of a number of our officers and soldiers, whether they ever witnessed a fight with bayonets during this war; and I have not found the man who has seen such a thing. And yet, I have heard of a hundred, if not five hundred—charges being made during the war. In all these charges then, one or the other party must have given way. Now what is the conclusion from all this? Why, that whether you fight with civilized or barbarous nations, or with civilized and barbarous mixed, with royalists or republicans, with equal or unequal numbers, (the disproportion not being very great,) you have

only to stand firm in a bayonet fight, to assure you of victory. There is nothing in war more certain than this. When the battle then comes to a cross of bayonets, whatever may be your alarms, see it through, and your triumph is sure.

Charging up to the cannon's mouth. This is considered the very acme of heroism. Well now, there is not the one-tenth part of the danger in it that is generally supposed. The reason is plain. Cannon cannot be constantly adjusted to an ever-approaching object. Many of you know how wildly they shoot, until the gunner, by a number of experimental shots, "gets the range," as it is called, even of a stationary object. But that range is lost with every approach of the object to the cannon. None but the most expert riflemen could hit a squirrel rapidly descending a tree. Now the movement of a cannon to hit an approaching regiment must be like that of the rifleman's gun, constantly lowering, but with a variable velocity, as the regiment approaches more or less rapidly. If the regiment oblique a little from the first line of approach, the cannon must undergo two adjustments to hit it—the one perpendicular, and the other lateral. Now who is competent to make the lubberly thing fulfil all these conditions? No man that ever lived or ever will live. To keep a cannon sighted upon a moving object is difficult enough; but to load it and fire it, and still keep

it on the moving object, is impossible. "Marching up to the cannon's mouth" then, if done quickly, is demonstrably less dangerous than remaining stationary, at exact cannon range.

A word more, and I have done. Possibly, before the war ends, you may get under a General who may command you to pursue a routed foe. In that event, stop not as long as you can keep your feet. Bear hunger and thirst, to the utmost point of endurance, rather than stop; and cut off your arm sooner than pause to gather booty at such a time. The reason is obvious: when your enemy is in flight, he is impotent, and you destroy him without hazard to yourselves. His dispersion is so great, that he cannot be brought to face you again for months, if ever. His all falls into your hands. His spirit is broken for all time. And oh, remember as we pass along, that all these evils, half told, become yours when you flee.

Soldiers, lay to heart the things that I have written, and reduce them to practice, and our liberty is sure.

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